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ABSTRACT

The Educational Priorities Panel (EPP) conducted a mail survey of New York City school library staff, a telephone survey of community school districts, and an analysis of budget and payroll data for library services. Additionally, two member agencies, the Citizen's Committee for Children and the Women's City Club, undertook a cooperative study on school library services. Findings from the various efforts are offered in this report, which focuses on: current school library services in the New York City public schools; expenditures for library materials and how they compare with national trends (46% of the schools in the community school districts reported having no funds available to purchase new materials); and the current situation of library staff (budget figures indicate that 80% of the elementary schools do not have a certified teacher assigned to the library). The various surveys indicate a low priority for library programs in the elementary schools and an even lower priority for library services for the lowest grades. Following a brief discussion of the impact of this low priority, the report recommends that funds be earmarked for library materials; that an additional appropriation of $70,000 per district be made for the 32 community school districts to hire trained staff; and that all funds for both staff and materials should be contingent on (1) a maintenance of effort by districts; and (2) the development of a district-wide plan. (THC)

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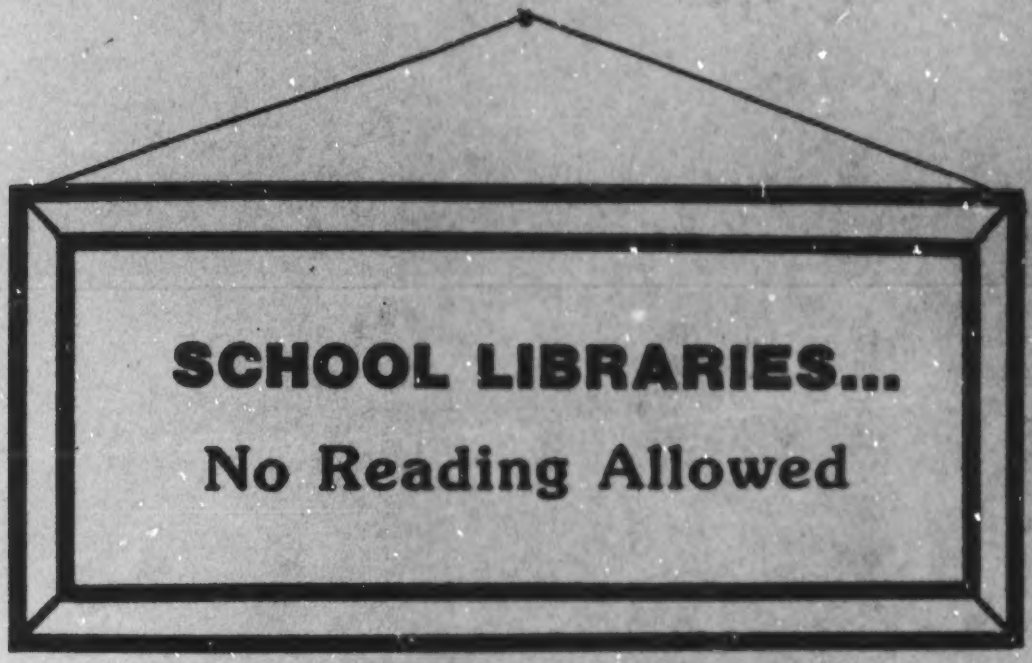

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EDUCATIONAL
PRIORITIES
PANEL

SCHOOL LIBRARIES...

No Reading Allowed

May 1985

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"All children can learn." The Educational Priorities Panel has worked persistently to keep that maxim as a guiding force in the New York City public schools. However, we must also constantly face the stark reality that all children don't learn in our schools.

In fact, not all of our students even learn how to read, and many more fail to master the rudiments of science, math, history, government, or literature before leaving school. During the current school year, $360 million was invested in remedial reading and math courses for the thousands of students who continue to fall behind. However, while expending these funds, the Board of Education and the city budget-framers have neglected one critical source of both motivation and assistance for students -- the school library. Effective use of school library resources, the EPP believes, might have helped to prevent much of the failure in the first instance. An allocation of only $5 million in this year's budget could provide vastly increased levels of materials, staff and student access for New York City's public school libraries.

School libraries were an easy target for retrenchment in 1975 and 1976. Annual allocations to purchase new books were suspended. School librarians, now licensed as teachers of library, are legally mandated by the state only for middle and secondary schools. Elementary school libraries seemed expendable, at a time when the choice was between the librarian and a classroom teacher. However, the fiscal crisis has passed and been resolved. In fact, a decade

is easily long enough for an event to become history. By this time, there are probably school libraries that have purchased books describing New York's brush with bankruptcy. Unfortunately, those schools are not likely to be in New York City, where so-called "temporary" reductions have become standard operating procedures for school libraries.

Library Mandates

What is the current status of school library services? Abysmal by any standard. The Educational Priorities Panel conducted a mail survey of school library staff, a telephone survey of community school districts, and an analysis of budget and payroll data for library services. In addition, two member agencies, Citizen's Committee for Children and the Women's City Club, have undertaken a cooperative study on school library services and have shared their preliminary findings with the EPP. Finally, the members of the New York City School Librarians Association have offered invaluable information and assistance.

Are there school library services today in the New York City public schools? There is an attempt at compliance with state education law and regulations. All secondary schools must have a certified school library media specialist. The number of periods per day of services is based on enrollment. If the school has fewer than 500 students, a full-time librarian is not required. A similar graduated requirement exists for the number of titles available in the library. Although there must be a library in every elementary school, no library personnel are required. However, there must be

an "adequate complement to the instructional program." There is no discussion in the regulations of the quality or currency of the titles in elementary school libraries.

Library Materials

Expenditures for materials are difficult to verify. They are not itemized separately in the budget. In the community school districts the principal decides how much of a school's limited resources for all supplies will be allocated for the library. In the high schools, there is a discrete, minimal allocation for library books. According to the results of our survey of school library personnel, the following picture may be drawn:

	Library Materials Allocations '84-85		
	Minimum	Maximum	Average
Elementary School	0 (38 of 73 responding)	$ 3,500	$ 419
Intermediate School	0 (8 of 16 responding)	6,400	1,055
Junior High School	0 (13 or 38 responding)	4,500	791
High School	$2,100	12,000	6,401

The average allocation for elementary schools is 54¢ per student, and high school expenditures are still only $2 per student.

How do these expenditures compare with national trends? The School Library Journal (May 1985) has just released the results of a national study, "Expenditures for Resources in School Library Media Centers FY 83-84." Average expenditures for books, periodicals and audio-visual materials nationally far outstrip those in

the city. Elementary schools spend nine times more than New York City schools, middle schools spend five times more, and high schools spend one and a half times as much. However, New York City high schools tend to have larger enrollments than nationally, where per pupil expenditures for school libraries average more than $9. In the Northeast region, spending for school library materials averages $11,247.78 per school or $17.82 per pupil, almost nine times the level of expenditures in New York City high schools and 33 times elementary school expenditures.

	Average	
	New York City	National
Elementary School	$ 419	$3,798.01
Intermediate School	1,055	
Junior High School	791	> 5,603.90
High School	6,401	9,475.93

The most striking response to the survey was that to the question, "What is the greatest need regarding library services in your school?" The unanimous response from those who actually work in school libraries (where such personnel exist) was "Money for materials."

Changes in library materials have moved to make them both more and less expensive. Obviously, pocketbooks and paperbacks and the availability of better-made softcover books can expand a library's standard offerings. On the other hand, new media, particularly video and computer software are now available in wealthy school districts and should be available in New York City public

school libraries. The push for excellence demands up-to-date science, math and social studies reference and research materials. The call for state-of-the-art technology is constantly in the headlines. Along with all of the other national commissions, the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science urges that "secondary schools must have school library media services of a strong quality."

From our sample, in 46 percent of the schools in the community school districts, there were no funds available to purchase new materials -- no magazines, no books, no periodicals, no up-to-date reference materials, no audio-visual materials. Also, it is important to realize that this figure does not reflect the full extent of the problem, since surveys would not be returned from a school that had either no staff in the library at all or had no library program.

Library Staff

What is the situation regarding personnel? The New York City public schools budget identifies expenditures of $15.3 million for school libraries for 504 positions this year. This is a reduction of 81 positions since FY 1980, and a decrease of 266 or more than one-third since before the fiscal crisis.

According to the Division of Personnel, in the 1984-85 school year, there were 293 licensed secondary teachers of library to cover 290 intermediate, junior and high schools, and there were 17*

* We question this figure since our mail survey identified 29 licensed librarians in just the schools responding which were those most likely to have a licensed teacher of library.

elementary school teachers of library working in their licensed area for 611 elementary schools. According to the modified budget, there were 177 individuals assigned to junior high/intermediate school libraries and 212 positions assigned in the high schools. Not all of these 389 individuals are licensed as teachers of library. Although 115 positions are allocated for elementary library services, few of these are licensed librarians. Licensed or not, 115 individuals do not cover even one-fifth (18.8%) of the elementary schools. Our district survey, with 18 districts responding (56% response rate), identified only seven elementary schools which definitely had a full-time licensed librarian. It should be noted that one reason for the poor response rate and the "soft" data available from the districts was due to the fact that responsibility for school library services is rarely fixed. It is difficult to identify an individual who is familiar with these programs, or the lack of them.

Library Use

With this level of personnel, what type of services are available in the schools? First some brief background information. As noted above, school librarians are fully licensed teachers, teachers of library. In order to become licensed, they must have completed 36 semester hours in library science plus 12 semester hours in education, and passed the appropriate Board of Examiners exam. As teachers of library, in an elementary school, they may teach up to twenty periods each week. Teachers of library have the same administrative duty assignments, lunch time, and preparation periods

as all other teachers in the school; however, their maximum teaching load is reduced. The clear rationale is to provide time for professional activities related to the library program, including the administrative and clerical duties required to run the library, opening the library for general use, consulting with teachers on appropriate materials for class assignments, etc. Similarly, teachers of library in secondary schools cannot be given administrative assignments, reserving that time for the library program. Because of their limited teaching load, teachers of library are more "expensive" than a regular teacher who can "cover" more student-hours per day. In an elementary school, where no specific state mandates pertain, the library is often the site for supervising classes while the regular teacher is scheduled for a preparation period or an administrative duty assignment, i.e., class coverage. This coverage can be provided by either a "floating" or "cluster" teacher or a teacher of library, though the cluster teacher is allowed to cover more classes.

The result in many elementary schools is that the library is indeed open, but, unfortunately, more often than not, it is just the backdrop to study hall or an assignment that could be given in any classroom. Too often, the cluster teachers are untrained and inexperienced in teaching library skills, selecting books, or exploring the resources of the library with children. Even when a teacher of library is assigned to class coverage, they are hindered because they have no time to meet with the regular classroom teacher to discuss the subject area curricula and recent assignments or to do joint planning. Finally, since the library

is continuously filled, it is unavailable for general use by students, whether to find a book for recreational reading, to look up the answer to a question, or to work on an assignment.

Obviously, many teachers move past these obstacles to develop library programs. Many cluster teachers do use coverage periods to teach library skills. They put in extra time and they draw on other resources. Too often, however, libraries have become crowded classrooms, and the library program is gone.

How prevalent is the problem? Budget figures would indicate that a full 80 percent of the elementary schools do not even have a teacher assigned to the library, regardless of license. This figure, as mentioned, does not reflect all of the teachers who provide coverage in the library setting. However, our various surveys indicate a low priority for library programs in the elementary schools and an even lower priority for services for students in the lowest grades. In addition, districts which are overcrowded (particularly Community School Districts 6, 10, 17, 18 and 24) have long since converted their libraries to classrooms. Although considerably more than 20 percent of elementary schools have libraries which are open and staffed for some portion of the day, our research indicates that no more than 20 percent actually provide a library program to the students.

The impact of this low priority is clear, as EPP's survey shows. Remember, survey respondents, 80 percent of whom had full-time library responsibilities, represent by and large the schools which have a library program and teachers who were motivated to respond. That makes the following findings especially disturbing.

- 86 percent of the elementary school respondents provided class coverage for an average of 17 classes per week. During this time the library is not available for general use;

- In 42 percent of the schools, the library is not available for general use by students;

- In 52 percent of the schools, no classes had used the library for a planned assignment other than those assigned for coverage. (There are schools in which this is common practice, however.)

- In 22 percent of the schools, no students use the library other than those assigned for class coverage.

- In 43 percent of the schools, library personnel had not met formally with other teachers.

Even in secondary schools, where class coverage is rarely provided and the library is available to students, the hours are often restrictive, conflicting with class schedules. Libraries that are open either before or after school are rare.

Conclusion

Why are library services essential? First, it is necessary to return to our initial premise: every child can learn. However, the schools must provide motivation and the appropriate services. What motivates a child to learn how to read? There are some youngsters who respond to any task at hand. Eager to please and receive approval, they will master their exercises and primers. However, it is so much easier to teach the child who is motivated to a specific task, who wants to read. Why would a child want to read? To finish a wonderful story, to visit a new place, to satisfy a curiosity, to answer a puzzle. The child who yearns to escape to a magical, scary, unusual, funny, luxurious, romantic or mysterious

place will learn how to read much sooner than the youngster left to decipher yet another mimeographed worksheet. As adults, we place enormous emphasis on reading and reading scores. However, in order for students to place the same priority on reading, there must be a reason, a motivation, an immediate reward. That reward is the joy of reading.

The school system can continue to spend millions of dollars annually for remediation. However, these programs will not succeed until students want to read, and for that they must have ready and frequent access to books.

As one example, New York City public school students now take an annual test -- The Degrees of Reading Power. The goal is to identify a student's ability level and then select appropriate materials while monitoring student progress. The test results include listings of books which have already been "scored" to match test levels as well as the procedure so that teachers can score other books and materials. Without a school library program, there is no one to review the scores in relationship to available resources, no one familiar with all of the latest literature to suggest books, no one to review and score available materials, and probably few books or materials at all. The entire process falls apart.

Library programs are the vehicle to motivate students to read on their own. Not only should there be books available, but there must be someone trained to help find the right book on the right subject and level, someone who can select the best of the new offerings, continually updating and expanding the selection.

The library program should also be an integral part of subject area curricula. The ideal program would coordinate with a classroom teacher's planning, identifying resource materials that can expand a lesson, spark a new one, and provide further reading for the student who is interested in delving further. Obviously, as students advance, the library becomes the focus for learning and practicing research skills. These again are best developed when classroom and library personnel have time and resources to work together, selecting appropriate materials and expanding the lesson's reach.

Today's library programs suffer from a lack of both personnel and materials. There is no one to plan and deliver programs and only dwindling collections to oversee.

Imagine entering a library today that was stocked in 1975. There would probably be literature that contained sex stereotyping and little to promote nontraditional roles for girls and young women. There would be little available in the much needed and now expanding area of high interest-low academic level materials for the older student with limited basic skills. Maps, globes, and atlases would be missing 14 countries and misnaming another nine. This library would have no references or materials about a host of events -- the 1977 New York City blackout, the first test tube baby, the hostage crisis, U.S. Presidents named Carter and Reagan, the Three Mile Island nuclear reactor accident, the space shuttle, the first woman astronaut, the 1980 and 1984 Olympics and countless scientific discoveries. There would be no handbooks on using a personal computer. Of course few of our libraries have been

completely frozen in time. But none of them is up-to-date, none of them is complete, none of them does justice to our students.

Recommendations

The Board of Estimate and City Council must begin the work to rebuild school libraries. This must take place in two phases.

1. Materials

First, the city must provide earmarked funds for library materials. The state has now taken the first step, appropriating $2 per student for the next school year. The city should match this effort with an additional $3 per student for a total OTPS appropriation of $2,790,000.* These dollars must be earmarked for library materials. This will start us on the road to rebuilding school libraries on all levels, bringing spending in New York City to $5 per student. This is still only slightly more than half of the $9 per student spent on average by school districts nationally.

2. Staff

However, as this paper explains, materials alone do not make a library program. Particularly, for elementary schools, trained staff is essential. The Educational Priorities Panel recommends an additional appropriation of $70,000 per district for the 32 community school districts. This allocation of $2,224,000 would be dispensed through Module 5B as categorical funding.

The total request for library services is $5,014,000.

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* The city allocation is based on the total number of students enrolled.

3. Maintenance of Effort

All funds for both staff and materials should be contingent on a maintenance of effort by districts. Districts that have previously set aside funds for library services would not be penalized for so doing by any adjustment in the distribution of aid. However, considering the meager amounts available currently for library programs, all existing services must be continued. The new aid must be supplemental and cannot supplant previous allocations. Eventually, a fully funded library program would require a formula that considers the number of students, the number of school buildings, and various indices of need. This initial allocation does not equal the dollars necessary to fund a full library program in every school. Therefore, as a base funding, it should be equal for every district.

4. Planning

The funding (both PS and OTPS) should also be contingent on the development of a district-wide plan. No funds should be released until the district has focused internal resources, identified needs, and created a plan that will maximize district strengths and address district issues. The plans should be reviewed by a committee representing the Office of Student Progress and the Division of Curriculum and Instruction.

Local plans are imperative to respond to the great diversity among districts and to unleash the creativity and commitment of district professionals. For example, districts with overcrowding problems must identify specific program models to address the space

problem -- perhaps mobile libraries or a distribution of a rotating collection among classrooms. Districts with language minority students must create programs that integrate with ESL and bilingual programming and explore multilingual materials. Districts that have encouraged minimal library services will have expansion models, as opposed to those districts starting from ground zero.

* * *

What can $70,000 purchase in a district for school libraries? One key suggestion for part of this allocation is to fund a full-time, trained district supervisor/coordinator with the sole responsibility of coordinating and supervising library services. A coordinator's first task would be to review library collections and select new materials for purchase. Other functions could include: regular review and updating of school library collections; training for regular teachers working in the library; developing and implementing systems for circulating materials to students; developing library curricula to integrate with the subjects covered in each grade; meeting with classroom teachers to assist them in making the most of available library materials; coordinating programs with neighborhood branches of the public libraries.

Other suggestions for using the funds include: providing part-time librarians in several schools; freeing teachers for one period each day to attend to library services; developing in-staff training for teachers on using library resources; implementing training sessions; developing parent workshops and parent training; providing

per-session coverage in middle schools to keep libraries open before and after school; producing curricula by subject and grade area that use library resources; developing special remedial programs based on recreational reading, etc.

Libraries are houses of knowledge. We must unlock the school libraries, replenish the supplies, and encourage students to enter and experience the joy of reading and learning.